

Society

- 583 Marriage is monogamous. The wife is bought, in spite of the poverty of the Seri. Santa Blanco paid 150 pesos in property for his wife. Chico Romero, a widower, paid more for his, a widow, "because she had three daughters, and a family with daughters is rich" (in expectation of bride prices).
- [515] The wife goes to live with the husband. A young couple lives with the young man's parents, perhaps in an annex to the house.
- 591 "The man commands." Chico was emphatic on this point, and repeated that when his son married he would live with him, not with the girl's relatives. Both he and Santo have step-sons-in-law as well as daughters-in-law living with them, but this is because they are chief and boat-owner respectively; (and the sons-in-law are young).
- 562 Copulation was said to take place immediately on marriage. McGee's statement of a period of continence being cited as the custom of a foreign tribe, the informant obviously wondered and laughed.
- 833 Intercourse goes on during pregnancy; but not for some months after birth, for fear of a new pregnancy, which would be injurious to the child. A good man respects his wife at all times and does not constantly pursue her.
- [243] No half-breeds were seen, and the Seri declare they are free of venereal disease.
- 144 Nothing could be elicited from the informant as to anything like the group-inherited names of lineages, or clans, of the Yuman tribes.
- 164 When a woman dies, the widower may give the children to his dead wife's parents to raise. This is the only item learned that might point to McGee's "matriarchate"; but the informant may have been thinking of particular cases. His son lives with him, though he lost the boy's mother.
- 551 Cross-cousin marriage is as prohibited as that of parallel cousins.
- 614 This is in accord with the sibling terminology for all cousins; but in view of the present small number of the tribe, the rule must work difficulty.
- 768 A man does not marry his dead wife's sister. Apparently he may not. Nor is there levirate. The informant volunteered the question if marriage with step-daughters was permitted by other peoples. Being told of the Navaho custom, he seemed shocked.
- [587] Neither husband nor wife looks at or addresses either parent-in-law. In the isolated, small-group life of the Seri, this rule can hardly be adhered to with complete rigor, and its conspicuous carrying out was not observed; but then everything in their behavior is casual, informal, and shavenly.
- 606 The kinship system as recorded contains a note as to a woman not addressing her younger sister's husband by kinship term except
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114 As to the "total absence" (p. 285) of marriage purchase, whereas
 583 I found it, such purchase can hardly be believed to have originated
 wholly within the last 35 years, in view of its wide distribution in
 native America.

114 The whole matter of maternal lineages crystallized into totemic
 614 clans with matron rule (pp. 10-11, 167-8, 269 seq.) seems a fantasy.
 A careful reading of the passages in question reveals how much
 McGee has built up on statements which he conscientiously admits to
 have been slender, probable only, and subject to possible misunder-
 standing. It must be remembered that in 1894 the matriarchate as
 original and primitive was still standard anthropological doctrine.
 At any rate, I got nothing suggesting even matrilineal reckoning in
 my indirect approaches to the subject, and explicit denials when it was
 directly presented.

114 That house-building may now and then be "accompanied by a
 342 chant" (p. 223) is possible, though it seems out of accord with the
 haphazard and shiftless methods of Seri work and the flimsy irregu-
 larity of their homes; but that the chant was "usually led by the
 eldest matron" seems more matriarchate.

114 That the Upanguayma, Guayma, and Tepjoka were successively
 174 "extruded" (p. 75) would be correct if there were anything to show
 that the Seri were the parent stock of superior virtue, conservatism,
 and faithful attachment to their original habitat.

114 The statement (p. 11) that "kinship terms are strikingly scanty,"
 601 made in the face of round-about and imperfect speech communica-
 tions with the Seri, I cite only as an indication of the degree of
 McGee's readiness to fall back upon his preconceptions when facts
 became thin.

114 I did not note the absence of superior medial incisor teeth ob-
 304 served by McGee (p. 169) in married women. If a regular practise,
 its connection with the puberty rite would be a natural inference.
 But knocking out of teeth is a rare custom in America.

114 McGee's statements (pp. 196-7) that it is "undignified, if not
 224 wrong" to kill deer other than with the hands, and that jackrabbits
 are "customarily taken alive to camp," seem over-emphases. That a
 sense of sport or passing pride, or lack of weapons, now and then
 leads to such happenings, I do not doubt; but the Seri seem too
 practical and unromantic to exact rules on the point. I suspect that
 a youth who insisted on living up to them would soon be considered
 a vain bore. I may add that I saw a crippled wild duck hobble about
 the camp on Tiburon for two days, being played with occasionally by
 the children—without unusual roughness or unkindliness—and that
 finally it wandered to the water and gradually drifted off without
 notice being taken.

114 Face painting is construed by McGee as sematic of totemic line-
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773 Before this it was day all the time, but then it became night and coyote only laughs at night. The black strings still hang about badger's neck."

It is strange to find, too, that a flood legend is traditional among the Seris. Chico said: "In the times of the ancients a great flood came, the ocean rose up and all the country of the Seris was under water except the top of Cerro Alto. There a few Seris gathered and were saved. Everyone else was drowned. To this day the top of Cerro Alto is covered with brush which the flood did not submerge. All Seri children are taught this flood tradition, and they must learn it by heart so as to teach their children and their grandchildren."

764 The death of a tribesman gives no cause
[765] for ceremony among the Seris, although the
nearest relatives may customarily wail, some-
times for months, morning and evening. The
disposal of the bodies of the dead, is, how-
ever, of considerable interest. A hole about
[412] three feet deep is dug by means of large
clam shells and a cave is excavated for the
head such that the earth will not touch it.
The deceased Indian is wrapped in his own
blanket and laid in the grave with the head
to the East, face up. The body is covered
and the grave is partly filled with earth, then
covered with a layer of the spiniest of chollas
and thorny brush, further filled, leveled and
covered with another layer of chollas to dis-
courage the coyotes from digging up the
body. When the Seris are on the move, how-
ever, and grave-digging is too great a task,
[766] a body may simply be lifted high to the fork
of a giant cactus and left there.

• 583 Marriage among the Seris is not so much
585 a ceremony as it is the completion of a bar-
gain. Under ordinary circumstances, when
a man buys a woman he strikes a bargain
with the bride's parents and makes a down
payment. Only after completion of the bar-
gain does the woman go to live with the man,
but even then payments do not cease but
continue intermittently through life. Chico
Romero, although "married" for fifteen
years, gave his wife's father some paint that
he had received in payment for guiding and
425 packing. It is also considered natural to
858 buy and sell children. One Seri, Santo

[p. 266 (B)]
[Text continues on p. 267 (B)]

535 semi-darkness.

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Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

[533] After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

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Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in by the old Chief. I said, "How?"

• 543 He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called

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'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and protection.

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At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

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When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily, but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

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In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This consists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

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There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old, or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls; so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

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They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.

123 but nothing happened.

123 We reached Hermosillo at three in the afternoon, and as we landed
622 Roberto and Sara met us, and Roberto embraced me. Then the Seri
[115] Indian Chief rushed up and fairly hugged me in his joy at seeing me
again. A timid wild-looking Seri boy, of fifteen years of age, shyly
shook hands with the Americano, while all the Mexican men and women,
fully one hundred in number, looked on open-mouthed and wide-eyed, to
see the Chief of the wildest and lowest of savage Indians in North
America, rush up and embrace a white man.

We all climbed into Roberto's auto-truck, and my things were
brought to Hotel Cohen, and then we all went to Roberto's home and
stayed all the afternoon. He had just returned from the coast the day
before, and Juan Tomas was determined to come also and greet me, and
the boy---a nephew---hung on to the Chief, and finally Roberto said
he would have to return on foot if he brought him. Juan Tomas said
that made no difference. He would walk to the coast eighty or ninety
miles, if only he could come.

[291] He was probably seventy-five years old. He wore a hat, but his
[302] hair was straggly and he had a slight moustache. He wore shirt and
trousers and a dirty kilt---remnant of the Pelican-skin-kilt---around
his waist, and he was barefooted. The boy had a not unpleasant face,
long wild hair, shirt, pants, and a cotton kilt reached to his knees.
He, too, was barefooted.

I gave the Chief a knife, and the boy a red crayon and fifty
cents. With the crayon he made a V on his kilt. He was very shy and
always kept in a shadow, or in the background, and he spoke no Spanish
although he knew the Spanish alphabet.

Sara showed some photographs and postcards in a baloptican in a
dark room, and among them were pictures of some Seris and myself.
These created much excitement with the Chief and the boy, and they
jabbered together in the Seri language with animation. They recognized
some of the subjects, their own people.

584 Juan Tomas is to be married soon to an elderly Seri dame, and we
622 have been invited to attend the fiesta. He has been laying in the
648 trousseau for the bride, and several gallons of mescal. A steer or
123 burro will have to be provided, and all the fixin's and nothing will
be left undone to make a very festive occasion. When asked to show
us his gifts he reluctantly brought forth a package which he care-
fully unwrapped and disclosed eighteen yards of manta, two red pieces
and one pink piece of Calico, some red handkerchiefs, and one box
for painting the face. He carefully wrapped these up again and put
them in the room set apart for him and the boy.

[600] The woman he is to marry has no male relatives from whom she can
[513] be bought, so the Chief appointed a man and created him Uncle pro-
tempore, and to him the Chief is going to give a rifle and a blanket
as the purchase price. Pretty high!

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The third specification states that a kin group, to constitute a clan, must exhibit actual social integration. Murdock stresses the necessity of observing a positive group sentiment, such as would be manifested by organized collective activities or group functions, before the group can be characterized as a clan. An essential feature of this group sentiment is the inclusion of the wife as an integral member of her husband's kin group.

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This sort of social integration was indeed exhibited by the Seri kin group of each subdivision. It was, in fact, fostered by the isolation brought about by the inhabitants' reservation of hunting and fishing rights for themselves. Tension existed between certain subdivisions and, since there was no chief, the oldest capable male organized and led the fighting force of the clan. In times of need, the members of the group united to give mutual assistance. The groom-to-be could expect material aid from his fellow clan members in the payment of the bride price. Mutual assistance was given in the fulfillment of puberty ceremony and burial obligations. The men cooperated in their hunting and fishing expeditions. The women of the clan, including the in-married spouses, cooperated in the gathering and sharing of food. Everyone could attend the various fiestas. It is said that in the performance of these collective activities, close harmony generally prevailed.

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BAND INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The division of the Seri tribe into bands was likely brought about through internal strife. During the period of band history known to the present-day Seri,^a however, serious skirmishes seem to have been fought predominantly with non-Seri groups.^a

BAND I

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Band I internal relations appear to have been relatively peaceful. The inhabitants of subdivisions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were fishermen as well as hunters and gatherers, whereas the people of subdivision 6 preferred to subsist on gathered food and wild game. Also, the members of Band I robbed cattle and horses, which pursuit brought reprisals from the Mexican ranchers. There was apparently considerable social intercourse among the six subdivisions, even to the extent that hunting rights of one were sometimes granted to inhabitants of a neighboring section.

Trouble developed when some members of Band I speared fish within the domain of Band V. Here also bitter fighting broke out, and any semblance of peaceful co-existence between the two groups was destroyed.

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the vessel to Guaymas. With the aid of a group of Yaqui, some of these women were said to have been permitted to go to Hermosillo and eventually to return to their home on Tiburon. Others of their group are said to have remained near Guaymas. The women who returned to Tiburon reported that the San Esteban women and children were put aboard another ship which sailed southward.

BANDS I, III, AND IV

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As opposition from the Papago and government forces increased, the members of Band I were forced to seek refuge on Tiburon Island. The mainland members of Band III (subdivisions 11 and 12) were also forced, especially during the Encinas Wars, to flee to Tiburon. There the combined forces of Bands I, III, and IV sought to cope with the military expeditions sent out through the years to exterminate them. Tiburon Island is an adverse battlefield for the uninitiated; some expeditions were turned back due to lack of potable water or because of failure to make contact with the enemy in the mountainous terrain. Some expeditions did encounter the Seri, however, and many natives were either killed or captured.

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Through the years, then, these military encounters, along with smallpox and measles epidemics, were responsible for reducing the Seri tribe to a small remnant. The band and clan systems lost their functional relevance as the people continued to live together for mutual protection. Shortly after the turn of the century, the expeditions and raids had practically ceased.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BANDS TODAY

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With the dissolution of the band system, the rule of descent shifted from patrilineal to bilateral, and the rule of residence shifted from patrilocal to neolocal.

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Although the substance of the band system is no longer a reality, the concept of land ownership still remains. A young Seri of today may choose to be associated with either the (patril) of his father or that of his mother. He is said to inherit part ownership of the area. It is recalled by one informant that in former times ownership of a mountain was especially important. Sometimes ownership of a mountain was included as part payment for a bride. Thus a person might 'own' a mountain in a subdivision other than his own.

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A custom exists even today whereby a person names his dog after a mountain or other geographical point located in his subdivision. Although the person may re-use the name, each dog so named must be of the same sex as the first.